
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Forests and Range
Ministry of Community Development

COMMUNITY TRUST RESTORES COLUMBIA VALLEY GRASSLANDS

INVERMERE – Twelve forest workers will restore about 750 hectares of grassland near Invermere to provide better habitat for wildlife and cattle, through \$400,000 from the Community Development Trust’s Job Opportunities Program, Community Development Minister Kevin Krueger and Forests and Range Minister Pat Bell announced.

“The Community Development Trust is one of our key tools to assist forest workers, their families and communities through this difficult time,” said Krueger. “This funding will help provide 12 jobs while improving natural wildlife habitat in the area.”

The workers will remove young trees from previously harvested sites that are now overstocked with small trees, near the Dutch-Findlay and Wolf-Sheep Creek areas, south of Invermere. The tree removal, combined with prescribed burns, will mimic wildfire patterns and help restore the area to open rangelands comprised of natural grasses and vegetation. The rangeland will support cattle and wildlife including elk, deer, and bighorn sheep.

“The Job Opportunities Program is creating employment for Columbia Valley forest workers that will help restore the area’s grasslands and keep skilled workers in the valley,” said Bell. “The Rocky Mountain Trench Society is showing leadership in identifying ways that forest workers can create long-term environmental benefits in the Kootenays.”

The six-month project is led by the Rocky Mountain Trench Natural Resources Society. Work is expected to begin in April.

“The Job Opportunities Program project is a win-win-win program because unemployed forest workers are getting much needed employment, the forest industry is retaining skilled workers, and much-needed grassland restoration will move forward,” said Rocky Mountain Trench Natural Resources Society co-ordinator Dan Murphy.

The project is in addition to a 12-worker, \$208,000-Job Opportunity Program project the society is leading near Cranbrook. The society is a coalition of nine hunting, ranching, environmental and wildlife organizations dedicated to restoration and conservation of grassland and open forest ecosystems in the East Kootenay and Upper Columbia Valley.

“With the Job Opportunities Program, the East Kootenay is seeing the benefits of government investment in retraining and economic diversification,” said Tourism, Culture and the Arts Minister Bill Bennett. “These projects not only provide meaningful work, they also contribute to the financial and social success of the local communities.”

The \$26.25-million Job Opportunities Program is reducing the impact of current layoffs on workers employed in the forest industry, retaining skilled forest workers for the anticipated future upturn, and preserving the characteristics of the labour force in forest-dependent communities.

Forest-dependent communities or organizations, licensees and contractors working in co-operation with a forest-dependent community are eligible to submit a project proposal to the Job Opportunities Program. To date, the program has approved over \$13 million to support 79 projects, which will employ more than 620 forest workers in communities across the province.

The Job Opportunities Program is one component of the Community Development Trust, which was announced last spring. B.C.'s share of the federal trust is \$129 million over three years, with funds also directed to a tuition assistance program and the Transition Assistance for Older Workers Program.

In the 2009-2010 budget, the Province committed an additional \$30 million for further programs similar to those offered under the Community Development Trust.

For more information about the Community Development Trust and Job Opportunities Program, go to: www.cd.gov.bc.ca/cdt/

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